



The Caribbean Tourism Conference 27: *The Business of Making Dreams Come True.*

There is something ironic about the hustle and bustle around the hotels during the CTC-27. Ministers of Tourism, Travel Writers and Travel Agents, Tour Wholesalers and Cruise Line Executives are all devoted to the business of creating an escape from stress and the demands of the work-a-day world. It can be an exhausting business getting the public to relax. While a tourist sits on a beach, exotic drink in hand, gazing at tranquil turquoise seas and white sands, they don't think about all the work it took to get them there.

This annual conference officially opened on Sunday with a flurry of events, participants dashing from one to another. Since Saturday, Tourism officials of nearly 30 countries have been meeting to discuss the business of keeping the Caribbean one of the top tourist destinations of the World.

On Sunday, the Wyndham Hotel, official headquarters for the conference hosted a day for the media where each country made a twenty-minute presentation with Q and A about their island's assets. They extolled their virtues and plans for the future to promote their country and keep the quality of service offered at high levels. Not only does tourism account for 70% or better of the employment and income of the island populations, it provides revenues for Ad Agencies and Marketing Experts from the U.S. too! How does one market a dream? When viewed in a group like this the art of finding that catch phrase that will catch the customer's imagination is almost amusing. Nevis-"Naturally"; Barbados-"Just Beyond Your Imagination" St Maarten-"Twice the Vacation-Twice the Fun"; "The Anguilla Experience"; Turks and Caicos- "Beautiful by Nature"; Jamaica "When you go-you KNOW"; The British Virgin Islands-"Natures Little Secret". While breaking for lunch at the Pago-Pago restaurant hosted by the Aruba Tourism Authority, Ms. Croes of the ATA made the presentation for the host island Aruba-"Where Happiness Lives"

Though a great deal of the conference workshops and discussions are devoted to the marketing of the fantasy island, it is evident that these people are also very serious about making sure they deliver the dream. Their concerns are making sure that they keep their promise of a clean environment, friendly natives, excellent accommodations and services. Dozens of expert speakers will address subjects such as "Selling Caribbean Vacations to Travelers with Special Needs"; "E-business as a Global Driver" "By Air, By Land, By Sea-Industry Analysts Present the Facts" and "The Ins and Outs of Cruise Tourism."

While the travel media were being enlightened at the Wyndham, travel agents received ACE (Aruba Certified Experts) training at the Occidental Hotel, with a light lunch and Aruba Marketplace afterwards. Aruba's major resorts and some activity operators were there to display their charms.

Sunday ended with the official opening ceremonies of the CTC-27 with presentations by Aruba Minister of Tourism and Transportation Edison Briesen, and Keynote Speaker Prime Minister of Aruba the Honorable Nelson O. Oduber. Prime Minister Oduber spoke of Aruba's growing tourism industry and advances and needs to maintain the environment, culture and history which make the island more attractive.

After the opening official delegates and media were able to mingle and get to know each other as they enjoyed a fabulous buffet around the pool deck of the Radisson Resort. Traditional island dishes such as Keshi Yena, Johnny Cake and Kalalu plus Aruban sevicehe garnered the menu. There were traditional island dancers performing throughout the evening and various native arts and crafts displays. Guests could take home a souvenir photo of themselves with the Natural Bridge, Aruba's #1 Attraction as a backdrop, compliments of Checkpoint Color.

There are 800 delegates in Aruba for the Caribbean Tourism Conference, of which nearly 10% are travel media. These are the authors of travel guides, the editors of travel magazines for the trade and consumer, or hosts of travel websites. There is up-to-the-minute coverage of all the events by Voice of the Caribbean Media service that is streaming updates to the Internet even as you are reading this article. Every Saturday night from Midnight to 5 am all the Caribbean Tourism News can be heard on WLIB, New York 1190 AM on your dial. When planning a Caribbean vacation, the latest news can be view at www.ctenews.com. As Clude Lettsome, Permanent Secretary of Tourism for the British Virgin Islands stated "Tourism is the Life Blood of the Caribbean." So enjoy your vacation, because no matter where you go in the tropics, someone is working very hard to make sure you do.

